Sacramental Preparation
FOR THE
Holy Communion
IN SHORT.

Wherein are
Directions and *Meditations*,
Containing the Substance of what is *Needful* and *Useful* Before, In, and After the Administration of the
LORD's SUPPER.

To which is added
Plain and Practical
DIRECTIONS
FOR THE
Profitable Reading
OF THE
Sacred Scriptures.

By a Reverend Divine of the Church of *England.*

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Sacramental Preparation FOR THE HOLY COMMUNION IN SHORT.

Direct. 1. *UNderstand well the proper Ends to which this Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ was instituted by him*: And take heed you use it not to other Ends for which it was never appointed. The *True Ends* are these. 1. To be a *Solemn Commemoration of the Death and Passion of Jesus Christ*, to keep it as it were in the Eye of the Church, in his bodily absence till he come, 1 *Cor.* 11. 24, 25, 26. 2. To be a *Solemn Renewing of the Holy Covenant*, which was first entred in Baptism between Christ and the Receiver: And in that Covenant it is on Christ's Part, a solemn Delivery of *Himself first*, and with *Himself* the Benefits of *Pardon*, *Reconciliation*, *Adoption*, and Right to Life Eternal: And on *Man's* Part it is our solemn Acceptance of Christ with his Benefits, upon his Terms, and a delivering up our selves to Him as his Redeemed ones; even to the *Father* as our Reconciled Father, and to the *Son* as our Lord and Saviour, and to the *Holy Spirit* as our Sanctifier; with professed thankfulness for so great a Benefit. 3. It is appointed to be a lively *objective Means*, by which the Spirit of Christ should work,

to ſtir up, and exerciſe, and encreaſe the Repentance, *Faith*, *Deſire*, *Hope*, *Love*, *Joy*, *Thankfulneſs*, and *new Obedience* of Believers; by a lively Repreſentation of the *Evil of Sin*, the *infinite Love of God in Chriſt*, the firmneſs of the *Covenant* or *Promiſe*, the *Greatneſs* and *Sureneſs* of the Mercy given, and the *Bleſſedneſs* purchas'd and promis'd to us, and the great *Obligations* that are laid upon us. And that herein *Believers* might be ſolemnly called out to the moſt ſerious exerciſe of all theſe Graces, and might be provoked and aſſiſted to ſtir up themſelves to this Communion with God in Chriſt, and to pray for more as through a Sacrificed Chriſt. 4. It is appointed to be the ſolemn *Profeſſion* of Believers of their Faith, and Love, and Gratitude, and Obedience to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, and of continuing firm in the Chriſtian Religion. And a Badge of the Church before the World. 5. It is appointed to be a *Sign* and *Means* of the *Unity*, *Love* and *Communion* of Saints, and their readineſs to communicate to each other.

Direct. II. *Look upon the Miniſter as the Agent or Officer of Chriſt, who is commiſſion'd by him to Seal and Deliver to you the Covenant and its Benefits; and take the Bread and Wine, as if you heard Chriſt himſelf ſaying to you, Take my Body and Blood, and the Pardon, and Grace which is thereby purchas'd.* It is a great Help in the Application, to have Mercy and Pardon brought us by the hand of a *Commiſſion'd Officer* of Chriſt.

Direct. III. *In your Preparation before hand, take heed of theſe two extreams.* 1. *That you come not prophanely and careleſly, with common Hearts, as to a common Work:* For God will be ſanctified in them that draw near him, *Lev.* 10. 3. And they that Eat and Drink unworthily, not diſcerning the Lord's Body from common Bread, but Eating as if it were a common Meal, do Eat *Death* to themſelves inſtead of Life.

Life. 2. *Take heed your miſtakes of the Nature of this Sacrament, ſhould poſſeſs you with ſuch fears of unworthy Receiving, and the following Dangers as may quite diſcompoſe and unfit your Souls for the joyful exerciſes of Faith, and Love, and Praiſe, and Thankſgiving, to which you are invited.* It ſhould be received in a *Feaſting* frame of Mind.

Direct. IV. *Let your Preparation to this Sacrament conſiſt of theſe Particulars following.* 1. *In your Duty with your own Conſciences and Hearts.* 2. *In your Duty towards God.* 3. *And in your Duty towards your Neighbour.*

I. Your Duty with your *Hearts*, conſiſts in theſe Particulars,

1. That you do your beſt in the cloſe *Examination* of your Hearts about your State, and the *Sincerity* of your *Faith*, *Repentance*, and *Obedience*: To know whether your Hearts are true to God in the Covenant, which you are to Renew and Seal: Which may be done by theſe Enquiries, and diſcern'd by theſe Signs. (1.) Enquire, Whether you truly *Loath* your ſelves for all the Sins of your Hearts and Lives, and are a greater Offence and Burden to your ſelves becauſe of your Imperfections and Corruptions, than all the World beſides is, *Ezek.* 6. 9. and 20. 43. and 36. 31. *Rom.* 7. 24. (2.) Enquire, Whether you have no Sin, but what you are truly deſirous to *know*; and no Sin known, but what you are truly deſirous to be rid of: And ſo deſirous as that you had rather be perfectly freed from Sin than from any Affliction in the World, *Rom.* 7. 22. 18, 24. and 8. 18. (3.) Enquire, Whether you love the ſearching and reforming Light, even the moſt ſearching Parts of the Word of God, and the moſt ſearching Books, and ſearching Sermons, that by them you may be brought to know your ſelves in order to your ſetled Peace and Reformation, *John* 3. 19, 20, 21. (4.) Enquire, Whether you

truly Love that degree of *Holineſs* in others, which you have not yet attained your ſelves, and Love Chriſt in his Children with ſuch an unfeigned Love, as will cauſe you to releive them according to your Ability, and ſuffer for their ſakes when it is your Duty, 1 *John* 3. 14, 16. 1 *Pet.* 1. 22. and 3. 8. *James* 2. 12, 13, 14, 15. *Mat.* 25. 40, &c. (5.) Enquire, Whether you can truly ſay, That there is no degree of Holineſs ſo high but you deſire it, and had rather be perfect in the Love of God, and Obedience to his Will, than have all the Riches and Pleaſures of this World, *Rom.* 7. 18, 21, 24. *Pſalm* 119. 5. *Mat.* 5. 6. And had rather be one of the *Holieſt Saints*, than of the moſt renowned, proſperous Princes upon Earth, *Pſalm* 15. 4. and 16. 2. and 84. 20. and 65. 4. (6.) Enquire, Whether you have ſo far laid up your Treaſure, and your Hopes in Heaven, as that you are reſolved to take that only for *your Portion*; and that the Hopes of Heaven and Intereſt of your Souls has the *Preheminence* in your *Hearts* againſt all that ſtands in Competition with it, *Col.* 3. 1, 3, 4. *Mat.* 6. 20, 21. (7.) Enquire, Whether the chiefeſt Care of your Hearts, and endeavour of your Lives be to ſerve and pleaſe God, and to enjoy him for ever, rather than for any worldly thing, *Mat.* 6. 33. *John* 5. 26. 2 *Cor.* 5. 6, 7, 8, 9. (8.) Enquire, Whether it be your daily deſire and endeavour to *mortifie* the *Fleſh*, and waſter it's rebellious Oppoſition to the *Spirit*; and you ſo far prevail, as not to *Live*, and *Walk*, and be *Led* by the Fleſh, but that the courſe and drift of your Life is Spiritual, *Rom.* 8. 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13. *Gal.* 5. 17, 21, 22. (9.) Enquire, Whether the World and all its Honour, Wealth and Pleaſure appear to you ſo ſmall and contemptible a thing, as that you eſteem it as Dung, and nothing in Compariſon of Chriſt, and the Love of God, and Glory; and are reſolved, that you will rather let go all than

your

your Part in Christ; and which uses to carry it in the Time of Trial in your deliberate choice, *Phil.* 3. 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20. 1 *John* 2. 15. *Luke* 14. 26, 30, 33. *Mat.* 13. 19, 21. (10.) Enquire, Whether you are *resolved* upon a course of Holiness and Obedience, and to use those Means which God doth make known to you to be the way to please him, and to subdue your Corruption: And yet, feeling the frailties of your Hearts, and the burden of your Sins, do trust in *Christ* as your Righteousness before God, and in the *Holy Ghost*, whose Grace alone can illuminate, sanctifie and confirm you, *Acts* 11. 23. *Psalm* 119. 57, 63, 69, 106 1 *Cor.* 1. 30. *Rom.* 8. 9. *John* 15. 5. 2 *Cor.* 12. 9. By these Signs you may safely try your *States*.

2. When this is done, you are also to try the *Strength*, and *Measure* of your Grace; that you may perceive your weakness, and know for what help you should seek to Christ; and to find out what inward *Corruptions*, and *sinful Inclinations* are yet *strongest* in you, that you may know what to lament, and to ask forgiveness of, and help against.

3. You are also to take a strict account of your *Lives*; and to look over your dealings with God and Men, in Secret and Publick, especially of late since the last renewal of your Covenant with God: and to hear what God and Conscience have to say about your Sins, and all their Aggravations, *Psalm* 139. 23. 1 *Cor.* 11. 28.

4. And you must labour to get your Heart affected with your Condition as you do discover it: To be humbled for what is sinful, and to be desirous of help against your weakness, and thankful for the Grace you Discern.

5. *Lastly*, You must consider of all the Work you go to do, and all the Mercies you are going to receive, and what Graces are necessary to all this and how they must be used: And accordingly look

up all these Graces, and prepare them for the exercise to which they are to be called out.

II. Your Duty towards God in your Preparation for this Sacrament is,

1. To cast down your selves before him in humble Penitent Confession, and Lamentation of all the Sins which you discover; and to beg his Pardon in Secret, before you come to have it publickly Sealed and Delivered. 2. To look up to him with that *Thankfulness*, *Joy*, and *Love*, as becomes one that is going to receive so great a Mercy from him: And humbly to beg that Grace which may prepare you, and quicken you to and in the Work.

III. Your Duty towards *others* in this your Preparation is,

1. To Forgive those that have done you wrong, and to confess your Fault to those whom you have wronged, and ask them forgiveness, and make them Amends and Restitution, so far as is in your Power: And to be reconciled to those with whom you are fallen out; and to see that you love your Neighbours as your selves, *Mat.* 5. 23, 24, 25, 26, 44. *James* 5. 16. 2. That you seek Advice of your Pastors, or some fit Persons, in Cases that are too hard for your selves to Resolve, and where you need their special help. 3. That you lovingly admonish them that you know do intend to Communicate unworthily, and to come thither in their Ungodliness, and gross Sin unrepented of: That you show not such hatred of your Brother, as to suffer Sin upon him, *Lev.* 19. 17. but tell him his Faults as Christ has directed you, *Mat.* 18. 15, 16, 17. and do your parts to promote Christ's Discipline, and keep pure the Church. See 1 *Cor.* 5. throughout.

Direct. V. *In the Time of the Administration go along with the Minister throughout the Work, and keep your Hearts close to Jesus Christ in the exercise of all those Graces, which are suited to the several Parts of the*

the Administration. Think not, that all the Work must be the Ministers: It should be a busie Day with you, and your *Hearts* should be taken up with as much Diligence, as your *Hands* be in your common Labour; but not in a *toilsome weary* Diligence, but in such *delightful* business as becomes the Guests of the God of Heaven at so sweet a Feast, and in the receiving of such invaluable Gifts.

Here I shall distinctly show. 1. What *Graces* they be that you must there Exercise. 2. At what *Seasons* in the Administration, each of these inward Works are to be done.

I. The *Graces* to be exercis'd are these (besides that Holy Fear and Reverence, which is common to all Worship.) 1. An humble Sense of the *odiousness of Sin*, and of our *undone Condition* as in our selves, and a displeasure against our selves, and loathing of our selves, and melting *Repentance* for the Sins we have committed; as against our *Creator*, and as against the Love and Mercy of a *Redeemer*, and against the Holy *Spirit* of Grace. 2. A *hungring* and *Thirsting Desire* after the Lord Jesus and his Grace, and the Favour of God, and Communion with him, which are there represented and offered to the Soul. 3. A *lively Faith* in our Redeemer, his Death, Resurrection, and Intercession: And a *trusting* our miserable Souls upon him, as our sufficient Saviour and Help: And a *Hearty Acceptance* of him and his Benefits upon his offer'd Terms. 4. A *Joy* and *Gladness* in the Sense of that unspeakable Mercy that is here offer'd us. 5. A *Thankful Heart* towards him from whom we do receive it. 6. A *fervent Love* to him, that by such Love doth seek our Love. 7. A *Triumphant Hope of Life Eternal*, which is purchas'd for us, and Sealed to us. 8. A *Willingness* and *Resolution* to deny our selves, and all this World, and suffer for him that has suffer'd for our Redemption. 9. A *Love to our Brethren*,

them, our Neighbours and our Enemies, with a readiness to relieve them, and to forgive them when they do us wrong. 10. And a *firm Resolution* for future Obedience to our Creator, and Redeemer and Sanctifier, according to our Covenant.

II. That you may be the readier, when it comes to Practice. I shall, as it were, lead you, by the Hand, through all the Parts of the Administration, and tell you *When* and *How* to exercise every Grace, and those that are to be joyned together, I will take together.

1. When you are *called* up, or *going* to the Table of the Lord, exercise youe *Humility*, *Desire* and *Thankfulness*, and say in your Hearts, 'What, Lord, 'dost thou call such a Wretch as I? What! me that 'have so oft despised thy Mercy, and willfully of-'fended Thee, and preferred the filth of this World, 'and the Pleasures of the Flesh before Thee? Alas, 'it is thy Wrath in Hell that is my due: But if 'Love will choose such an unworthy Guest, and 'Mercy will be honour'd upon such Sin and Misery, I 'come Lord at thy call; I gladly come: Let thy 'Will be done; and let that Mercy which invites 'me, make me acceptable, and graciously entertain 'me; and let me not come without the Wedding 'Garment, nor unreverently rush on Holy Things, 'nor turn thy Mercies to my Bane.

2. When the Minister is confessing Sin, prostrate your very Souls in the Sense of your unworthiness, and let your *Particular Sins* be in your Eye, with their heinous Aggravations: *The Whole need not the Physician, but the Sick.*

3. When the Words of Institution are read, and the Bread and Wine are solemnly Consecrated, by separating them to that sacred use, and the Acceptance and Blessing of God is desired, admire the Mercy that prepared us a Redeemer and say, 'O God how wonderful is thy Wisdom, and thy Love?

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'How ſtrangely doſt thou glorifie thy Mercy over 'thoſe Sins, that gave Thee advantage to glorifie thy 'Juſtice? Even thou our God whom we have offend-'ed, haſt out of thy own Treaſury ſatisfied thy own 'Juſtice, and given us a Saviour by ſuch a Miracle 'of Wiſdom, Love and Condeſcenſion, as Men or 'Angels ſhall never be able fully to comprehend. 'So didſt thou Love the ſinful World, as to give 'thy Son, that whoſoever believes in him ſhould 'not periſh, but have Everlaſting Life. O thou 'that haſt prepared us ſo full a Remedy, and ſo pre-'cious a Gift, ſanctifie theſe Creatures to be the 'Repreſentative Body and Blood of Chriſt, and 'prepare my Heart for ſo great a Gift, and ſo high, 'and holy, and honourable a Work.

4. When you ſee the *Breaking* of the *Bread*, and *Pouring* out of the *Wine*, let *Repentance*, and *Love*, and *Deſire*, and *Thankfulneſs* thus Work within you, 'O wondrous Love! O hateful Sin! How merciful, 'Lord, haſt thou been to Sinners? And how cruel 'have we been to our Selves and Thee? Could 'Love ſtoop lower? Could God be merciful at a 'dearer Rate? Could my Sin have done a more hor-'rid Deed, than to put to Death the Son of God? 'How ſmall a Matter has tempted me to that, 'which muſt coſt ſo dear before it was forgiven? 'How dear paid my Saviour for that, which I might 'have avoided at a very cheap Rate? At how low 'a Price have I valued his Blood, when I have ſin-'ned and ſinned again for nothing? This is my do-'ing, my Sins were the Thorns, the Nails, the 'Spear, can a Murderer of Chriſt be a ſmall Offen-'der? O dreadful Juſtice! It was I and ſuch other 'Sinners that deſerved to bear the Puniſhment who 'were guilty of the Sin, and to have been fewel 'for the unquenchable Flames for ever. O precious 'Sacrifice! O hateful Sin! O Gracious Saviour! 'How can Man's dull and narrow Heart be duly

'af-

'affected with ſuch tranſcendant things? Or Heaven
'make its due Impreſſion upon an Inch of Fleſh?
'Shall I ever again have a dull Apprehenſion of ſuch
'Love? Or ever haye a favourable Thought of Sin?
'Or ever have a fearleſs Thought of Juſtice? O
'break or melt this hardned Heart, that it may be
'ſomewhat conformed to my Crucified Lord! The
'Tears of Love and true Repentance are eaſier than
'the Flames from which I am redeemed. O hide
'me in theſe Wounds, and waſh me in this precious
'Blood. This is the Sacrifice in which I truſt:
'This is the Righteouſneſs by which I muſt be ju-
'ſtified, and ſaved from the Curſe of thy violated
'Law. As thou haſt accepted this, O Father, for
'the World, upon the Croſs, behold it ſtill on the
'behalf of Sinners, and hear his Blood that
'cries unto Thee for Mercy to the miſerable, and
'Pardon us, and accept us as thy reconciled Children
'for the ſake of this Crucified Chriſt alone. We can
'offer Thee no other Sacrifice for Sin, and we need
'no other.

5. When the Miniſter applies himſelf to God by *Prayer*, for the Efficacy of this Sacrament, that in it he will give us Chriſt and his Benefits, and Pardon, and Juſtifie us, and Accept us as his reconciled Children, join heartily and earneſtly in theſe Requeſts, as one that knows the *Need* and *Worth* of ſuch a Mercy.

6. When the Miniſter delivers you the Conſecrated *Bread* and *Wine*, look upon him as the Meſſenger of Chriſt, and hear him as if Chriſt by him ſaid to you, 'Take this my broken Body and Blood,
'and feed on it to Everlaſting Life: And take with
'it my Sealed Covenant, and therein the Sealed Te-
'ſtimony of my Love, and the Sealed Pardon of
'your Sins, and a Sealed Gift of Life Eternal; ſo
'be it you unfeignedly Conſent unto my Covenant,
'and give up your ſelves to me as my Redeemed
'ones.

'ones. Here the Minister by Christ's Authority delivers you Christ, and Pardon, and Title to Eternal Life. Let your Hearts therefore say with *Joy* and *Thankfulness*, with *Faith* and *Love*, 'O matchless 'Bounty of the Eternal God! What a Gift is this! 'And unto what unworthy Sinners! And will God 'stoop so low to Man? And come so near him? 'And thus reconcile his worthless Enemies? Will 'he freely Pardon all that I have done? And take 'me into his Family, and Love; and feed me with 'the Flesh and Blood of Christ? I believe; Lord, 'help my unbelief. I humbly and thankfully accept 'thy Gifts. Open thou my Heart, that I may yet 'more joyfully and thankfully accept them. Seeing 'God will glorifie his Love and Mercy by such incomprehensible Gifts as these, behold Lord, a 'Wretch that needs all this Mercy. And seeing it 'is the offer of thy Grace and Covenant, my Soul 'doth gladly take Thee for my God and Father; 'for my Saviour and my Sanctifier. And here I 'give up my self unto Thee, as thy Created, Redeemed, and (I hope) Regenerated one: As thy 'Own, thy Subject, and thy Child, to be saved, 'and sanctified by Thee, to be beloved by Thee, 'and to Love Thee to Everlasting. O Seal up this 'Covenant and Pardon by thy Spirit, which thou 'sealest and delivereſt to me in thy Sacrament; that 'without reserve I may be intirely and for ever 'thine.

7. When you see the Communicants receiving with you, let your very Hearts be united to the Saints in Love; and say, 'How goodly are thy 'Tents, O *Jacob*! How amiable is the Family of 'the Lord! Though they have yet all their Spots 'and Weaknesses, which he Pardons, and so must 'We. My Goodness, O Lord, extends not unto 'Thee, but unto thy Saints the excellent ones on 'Earth, in whom is my delight. What Portion of

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'my Eſtate thou requireſt, I willingly give unto the 'Poor, and if I have wronged any Man, I am wil-'ling to reſtore it: And ſeeing thou haſt Loved me 'an Enemy, and forgiven me ſo great a Debt, I 'heartily forgive thoſe that have done me wrong, 'and Love my Enemies. O keep me in thy Fami-'ly all my Days; for a Day in thy Courts is better 'than a thouſand, and the Door-keepers in thy 'Houſe are happier than the moſt proſperous of the 'Wicked.

8. When the Miniſter returns *Thanks* and *Praiſe* to God, ſtir up your Souls to the greateſt Chearfulneſs: And ſuppoſe you ſaw the heavenly Hoſts of Saints and Angels, praiſing the ſame God in the preſence of his Glory; and think with your ſelves that you belong to the ſame Family and Society as they, and are Learning their Work, and muſt ſhortly arrive at their Perfection: Strive therefore to imitate them in Love and Joy: And let your very Souls be poured out in *Praiſes* and *Thankſgiving*: And when you have the next leiſure for your Private Thoughts (as when the Miniſter is exhorting you to your Duty) exerciſe your Love and *Thanks*, and *Faith*, and *Hope*, and *Self-denial*, and *Reſolution for Future Obedience*, in ſome ſuch Breathings of your Souls as theſe; 'O my Gracious God, thou 'haſt ſurpaſſed all Humane Comprehenſion in thy 'Love! Is this thy uſage of unworthy Prodigals? 'I feared leaſt thy Wrath, as a conſuming Fire, 'would have devoured ſuch a guilty Soul, and thou 'wouldſt have charged upon me all my Folly: But 'while I condemned my Self, thou haſt forgiven 'and juſtified me; and ſurprized me with the 'ſweeteſt Embracements of thy Love. I ſee now 'that thy Thoughts are above our Thoughts, and 'thy Ways above our Ways, and thy Love excels 'the Love of Man, even more than the Heavens are 'above the Earth. With how dear a price haſt 'Thou redeemed a Wretch that deſerved thy Ever-

'laſt-

'lasting Vengeance! With how precious and sweet
'a Feast hast Thou entertained me, who deserved
'to be cast out with the Workers of Iniquity!
'Shall I ever again slight such a Love as this?
'Shall it not overcome my rebelliousness, and melt
'down my cold and hardned Heart? Shall I be sa-
'ved from Hell and not be Thankful? Angels are ad-
'miring these Miracles of Love, and shall not I ad-
'mire them? Their Love to us does cause them
'to rejoyce, while they stand by and see our Hea-
'venly Feast; and should it not be sweeter to us
'that are the Guests that feed upon it? My God
'how dearly hast Thou purchased my Love? How
'strangely hast Thou deserved and sought it? No-
'thing is so much my Grief and Shame, as that I
'can answer such Love with no more fervent,
'fruitful Love. O what an addition would it be to
'all this precious Mercy, if Thou wouldst give me
'a Heart to answer these thine Invitations? That
'thy Love thus poured out might draw forth mine,
'and my Soul might flame by approaching unto
'these thy Flames? And that Love drawn out by
'the Sense of Love might be all my Life? O that
'I could Love Thee as much as I would Love
'Thee; yea, as much as Thou wouldst have me
'Love Thee! But this is too great a Happiness for
'Earth: But Thou hast shewed me the Place where
'I may attain it: My Lord is there in full Possessi-
'on, who hath left me these Pledges till he come
'and fetch us to himself, and Feast us there in our
Master's Joy. O blessed Place! O happy Com-
'pany that see his Glory, and are filled with the
'Streams of these Rivers of Consolation! Yea,
'happy We whom Thou hast called from our dark
'and miserable State, and made us Heirs of that
'Felicity, and Passengers to it, and Expectants of
'it under the Conduct of so sure a Guide! O then
'we shall Love Thee without these sinful Pauses and

'and

'defects! In another Measure and another Manner
'than now we do: When Thou shalt reveal and
'communicate thy attractive Love in another Mea-
'sure and Manner than now! Till then, my God,
'I am devoted to Thee. By Right and Covenant
'I am thine. My Soul here beareth Witness a-
'gainst my Self, that my defects of Love have no
'Excuse. Thou deservest all, if I had the Love of
'all the Saints in Heaven and Earth to give Thee.
'What hath this World to do with my Affections?
'And what is this sordid, corruptible Flesh, that
'it's Desires and Pleasures should call down my
'Soul, and tempt it to neglect my God? What is
'there in all the Sufferings that Man can lay upon
'me, that I should not joyfully accept them for his
'Sake that has Redeemed me from Hell, by such
'unmatched, voluntary Sufferings? Lord, seeing
'Thou regardest, and so regardest, so vile a Worm,
'my Heart, my Tongue, my Hand Confess, that I am
'wholly Thine. O let me live to none but Thee, and
'to thy Service, and thy Saints on Earth! And O let
'me no more return unto Iniquity! Nor venture
'on that Sin which killed my Lord! And now Thou
'hast chosen so low a dwelling, O be not strange
'to the Heart that Thou hast so freely chosen!
'O make it the daily residence of thy Spirit!
'Quicken it by thy Grace: Adorn it with thy
'Gifts: Employ it in thy Love: Delight it in it's
'Attendance on Thee: Refresh it with thy Joys,
'and the Light of thy Countenance: And destroy
'this Carnality, Selfishness, and Unbelief: And let
'the World see that God will make a Palace in the
'lowest Heart, when he chooses it for the Place of
'his own abode.

Direct. VI. *When you come home Review the Mercy you have received, and the Duty which you have done, and the Covenant you have made:* And 1. Betake your selves to God in Praise and Prayer for the

the perfecting of his Work: And 2. Take heed to your Hearts that they grow not Cold, and that worldly Things, or diverting Trifles don't blot out the ſacred Impreſſions which Chriſt has made, and that they cool not quickly into their former dull and ſleepy Frame. 3. And ſee that your Lives be actuated by the Grace that you have received, that even they that you Converſe with may perceive that you have been with God. Eſpecially when Temptations would draw you again to Sin, and when the injuries of Friends or Enemies would provoke you, and when you are called to teſtifie your Love to Chriſt by any coſtly Work or Suffering, remember then what was ſo lately before your Eyes, and upon your Heart, and what you reſolved on, and what a Covenant you made with God. Yet judge not of the Fruit of your Receiving ſo much by Feeling, as by Faith: For more is promis'd, then you yet poſſeſs. *Baxter's Chriſtians Directory*, Tome II. *Chap.* XXIV.

Plain and Practical DIRECTIONS FOR THE Profitable Reading OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

** We must Plow with God's Heifer, if we would understand his Riddle.*

BEgin with *Prayer**. What the Apoſtle ſaith concerning every Creature of God. that *it is ſanctified*, and made fit for a Free and Holy Uſe, *By the Word of God and Prayer*, 1 Tim. 4. 5. may be applied to *Reading the Holy Scriptures*, and to every other ſolemn Action of our Lives, that it is ſanctified and made a Means of ſpiritual Good, *viz.* increaſe in Knowledge and Holineſs by Prayer: And therefore when we enter upon this Duty of Reading. We muſt lift up our Hearts to God, that He, who is the *Author* and *Inditer* of the Holy Scriptures, would be the *Interpreter* of 'em to us; That he would *open our Underſtandings*, as he did the Underſtandings of the Apoſtles

ſtles, (*Luke* 24. 45.) to underſtand the Scriptures, *i. e.* that we may underſtand the ſpiritual Senſe and meaning of 'em. There's the *Litteral Senſe*, which we may underſtand in a great Meaſure, by our natural Abilities of Reaſon, Conſideration, and the like, and by help of Humane Learning, as ſtudying the Originals, Reading of Commentators, *&c.* And there's alſo a *Spiritual Senſe*, which is ſpiritually diſcerned, which God *reveals unto us by his Spirit*, 1 Cor. 2. 9, 14. Hence *David* Praies ſo often for this Illumination of the Spirit upon this occaſion, *Pſalm* 119. 18, 27, 33. *Paul* while a *Phariſee*, was ignorant of this ſpiritual Senſe of the Law, notwithſtanding all his natural and acquired Abilities, till he was made to underſtand it by the Spirit, *Rom.* 7. 9. This is the *Unction from the Holy One*, which enables us to *Know all Things*, 1 John 2. 20. And to *Judge of all Things*, 1 Cor. 2. 15. And this we have Encouragement to beg, from that Promiſe, *James* 1. 5. *If any Man wants Wiſdom, let him ask it of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids not.*

2. *Be fill'd with a Senſe of thy own Emptineſs and Ignorance.* They that are full of themſelves have no room to receive any more; and therefore they are ſent empty away, (*Luke* 1. 53.) Empty of Knowledge; for, *He that thinks he knows any thing, knows nothing yet as he ought to know*, 1 Cor. 8. 2. VVhereas *Solomon* aſſures us (*Prov.* 11. 2.) that *with the lowly is Wiſdom.* For the Promiſe is made to ſuch, *Pſalm* 25. 9. *The Meek*, (the *Lowly*, or *Humble*; as it is Tranſlated, *Pſalm* 9. 12. and 10. 17. and ſo frequently) *Will he guide in Judgement, and the Lowly will he teach his Way.* This Diſpenſation and VVay of God's dealing in this reſpect, our Saviour Chriſt takes Notice of and bleſſes him for, *Mat.* 11. 25. *I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the Wiſe and Prudent*, (*i. e.* ſuch as

thought themſelves ſo: That were highly Conceited of themſelves, and of their own VViſdom and Underſtanding: As the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* were, *John* 9. 41. *Ye ſay, We ſee.* As Chriſt calls thoſe *Whole* and *Righteous*, which were ſo in their own Conceit, *Mark* 2. 17. So he calls them *Wiſe and Prudent*, that look'd upon themſelves as ſuch; tho' really it was otherwiſe with 'em, and therefore elſe-where he calls 'em *Fools and Blind*, (Mat. 23. 17.) *and haſt revealed 'em unto Babes*; i. e. (haſt opened the Underſtandings of my Diſciples and Followers, who have mean Thoughts of themſelves) to perceive, receive, and embrace the Myſteries of the Goſpel. It's a great help to Knowledge, to be acquainted with our own Ignorance. Therefore ſaid *Deo meo gratias ago, quod ignorantiam meam non ignoro. I Thank my God, that I am not ignorant of my Ignorance.*

Empty thy Self then of all Self-conceit, that thou mayſt be in a Capacity to be fill'd by God. Come with an humble, lowly Mind to the Reading of the Scripture: For *God gives Grace* (the Grace of Knowledge and Underſtanding as well as other Graces) to ſuch. Don't impoſe thy Senſe upon Scripture, but receive thy Senſe from the Scripture. Frame thy Notions and Apprehenſions according to the Model, and *Form of ſound Words* contain'd therein. Humbly deliver up thy Mind and Underſtanding to be caſt into the Mold thereof, (*Rom.* 6. 17.) to receive Impreſſions *from* it, and not to make Impreſſions upon it. 'Thoſe Men are to be abhor'd, 'that ſubmit not their Thoughts and Conceptions 'to this ſacred Standard; who compel the Scripture 'to ſerve their private Opinions; who make no 'Conſcience of putting a Text upon the Rack to 'make it ſpeak what it intended not; of miſerably 'torturing it that they may force it to confeſs what 'it never meant. Theſe Perſons ſhould be remind-

'ed

'ed how great a Sin it is to diſtort and deprave the 'Holy VVrit, and deſignedly to draw it to another 'Senſe than it naturally bears: And the Penalty is as grievous as the Crime; for as the 'Apoſtle St. *Peter* informs us; This Generation 'of Men, wreſt the Scriptures to their own Deſtruction. *Edwards* of the Excellency and Perfection of the Holy Scriptures, *Part* 3. p. 585.

3. *Be frequent and diligent in the Reading and Study of the Scriptures.* VVe are commanded by our Saviour Chriſt, *John* 5. 39. To *Search the Scriptures.* Not barely to read 'em, but to ſift 'em narrowly, thereby to find out the full Force and true Meaning of every Sentence; yea, of every VVord and Syllable. VVe muſt dig into the Bowels of the Scripture, as Miners do into the Bowels of the Earth for Silver and Gold, and precious Stones. The Scriptures are able to make us *Wiſe unto Salvation*, 2 Tim. 3. 15. To endue with ſaving VViſdom: This VViſdom is to be ſought for as Silver, and ſearched after as hid Treaſures, *Prov.* 2. 4. Silver and Treaſures are not gathered by every Lazy Paſſenger on the ſurface of the Earth: but Men muſt with indefatigable Pains and Induſtry, pierce into the Bowels of the Earth in queſt of thoſe hid Treaſures that lye buried in it: So muſt we for theſe Treaſures of Heavenly VViſdom. There are Things contain'd in the Scriptures which the Prophets of Old, notwithſtanding the Advantage of their own ſpecial Revelations, enquired diligently after; yea, which even the Angels themſelves deſire to bow down, and look into, 1 *Pet.* 1. 11, 12. Much more then ſhould they be ſtudied by us, who are of ſuch narrow Capacities, and ſhallow Underſtandings.

The Scripture is the beſt Interpreter of it ſelf under God: Therefore the more thou art Converſant in it, the greater Acquaintance thou wilt

get

with its Phraſe and Manner of Speech. What expreſt in one Place more doubtfully and obrely, is many Times expreſt in another more ainly and intelligibly. Therefore compare Place ith Place, and the ſcope of one Place, with the ope of another; for which purpoſe the Parallel riptures in *Clark*'s *Annotations* may be of good e.

Again, we are commanded alſo to have the *Word Chriſt dwelling in us richly*, Col. 3. 16. It muſt ot only be without us, but *within us*; not only in ur *Houſes*, but in our *Hearts*; and that not only as *Stranger* and Sojourner, but as a *Dweller* and Aider; not for a Day or Two, but for continuance, o take up its fixed reſidence there, ſo as to make our Meditation Day and Night: To have it eady by us for our uſe upon all Occaſions: And his not in a ſcanty Degree; not ſparingly and peuriouſly, but plentiouſly and *richly*; that we may e throughly furniſht to every good Work, 2 *Tim.* 3. 17. And for this end.

4. *Read it deliberately, with due Attention, Obſervation and Conſideration.* This is the Apoſtle's Direction, 1 *Tim.* 4. 13. *Give attendance to Reading.* Obſerve carefully what you read: Be intent upon it: Apply your Mind wholely to it. Let not your Thoughts run waſte, go aſtray, play the Truants and ramble after other Things; but keep 'em cloſe to Work; fix 'em upon the buſineſs in Hand: And then read with Deliberation, ſo as that nothing may paſs unobſerved. Run it not over haſtily, like a Taſk, but *conſider what is ſaid* (2 *Tim.* 2. 7.) eſpecially when you meet with any thing that does more nearly concern you, and is ſuited to your Caſe. Water pourd haſtily upon a narrow-mouth'd Veſſel will moſt of it run beſide, and but little will run in: We are narrow-mouth'd Veſſels, and apt to let things

ſlip: Therefore *we muſt give the more earneſt heed to the things we read* (Heb. 2. 1.) *leaſt we let Things run beſide:* That is the force of the Word, according to that Learned Critick *H. Stephens. Eâ ſignificatione quâ dicitur fluvius, aut aqua quæpiam præter fluere locum aliquem. Steph. in Theſauro.* We ſay, *Haſte makes Waſte:* And certainly by reading haſtily, we loſe abundance of that excellent Matter, which, by Deliberation, we might gain; as every one may find by Experience. The *Rabbins* have a Saying, That upon every Letter of the Law, there hang Mountains of Senſe; *Non eſt in lege vel litera una a quâ non pendent Montes magni.* Picke. Avoth. *ch.* 2. And our Saviour Chriſt tells us, (*Mat.* 5. 18.) That *one Jot, or one Tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the Law:* So, we ſhould not ſuffer one Jot or Tittle to paſs unobſerved; ſince a little Word may contain a great deal of Matter, and many excellent Leſſons may be learned from the very Coherence, Occaſion and the like. It is a Paſſage of Holy, Laborious Mr. *Stockton, That the obſerving and pondering every Word and Circumſtance in a Promiſe is of great Uſe. Stockton's Life*, p. 96. of which you may find many Examples in thoſe Memorials he left of himſelf, and Publiſht in his Life by my worthy Friend, and Academical Acquaintance Mr. *John Fairfax.*

5. *Come to the Word with earneſt Deſires to profit by it.* The Uſefulneſs and Profitableneſs of the Scripture in ſeveral Particulars, the Apoſtle acquaints us with, 2 *Tim.* 3. 16. *Rom.* 15. 4. (1.) It is profitable *for Doctrine*; to Teach us what we are to *Know*, *Believe*, and *Practice*, in order to our Everlaſting Happineſs. (2.) *For Reproof*; to enable us to convince Gain-ſayers, (*Tit.* 1. 9.) and confute Errors. (3.) *For Correction*; to reform the Life, and free it from all corrupt Manners, unwarrantable Practiſes and vicious Courſes. (4.) *For*

Inſtruc-

Inſtruction to Righteouſneſs; to teach us how to make further progreſs in the way to Heaven, and to walk on in the right way to true Happineſs. (5.) It is profitable to teach us how to exerciſe *Patience* under all the hardſhips we muſt undergo, and the Trials we may meet with in our Pilgrimage: (6.) It holds forth manifold *Comforts* to us, to enable us to run with chearfulneſs the Race that is ſet afore us. (7.) It ſerves to the Breeding, Encreaſing and Confirming our *Hope* and Expectation of Everlaſting Life. In which reſpects it has many glorious Titles and high Commendations given it by Authors, both Ancient and Modern. It is called both the Food and Phyſick of the Soul, an Apothecaries Shop where ſpiritual Medicines for all the Diſeaſes and Ailes of the Soul are to be found; where there's a Salve for every Sore, a Remedy for every Malady. But I can't better expreſs my ſelf upon this Head, nor diſplay the excellent Uſefulneſs of the Holy Scriptures, than in the Words of the Reverend Dr. *Roberts*, in the *Introduction to his Clavis Bibliorum*. 'Here are unfolded the Covenant of Grace, wholly made up of heavenly Cordials: The Promiſes of the Life that now is, and that which is to come, exceeding great and precious. The Comforts of God, able to Counterpoiſe the deepeſt Diſconſolations. Here are diſcovered the Miſeries of all that are in the firſt *Adam*, the Felicities of all that are in the ſecond *Adam*, and the Way how Poor Souls are Tranſlated from thoſe Miſeries to thoſe Felicities. In a Word, VVhat is there not in Holy Scriptures? Are we afflicted? Here's our Solace. Are we perſecuted? Here's our Protection. Are we deſerted? Here's our Recovery. Are we tempted? Here's our *Sword* and Victory. VVhileſt we Live, here's the Rule of our Converſation; when we dye, here's the Hope of our Glorification. So

'that

'that I may ſay with *Tertullian*, *I adore the fulneſs* 'of the Scripture.

Since then it is ſo exceeding Profitable, if we don't bring along with us ſincere and hearty Deſires to partake of this Profit, what do we ſpend our Time about it for? Come we then to it with a Mind and Deſire to Profit by it: To have our Minds more enlightned with the ſaving Knowledge of his Will, and all other Graces encreaſed, that we may abound in the Fruits of Holineſs and Righteouſneſs, and become more flouriſhing in the Courts of our God.

6. *Exerciſe Faith on the ſeveral Parts of the Scripture.* I don't mean barely to Aſſent to the Truth of 'em with an Hiſtorical Faith; that's no great Matter to do: Generally, all that call themſelves Chriſtians pretend to this: But to imploy an Operative Faith about 'em, *i. e.* ſuch a Faith as ſhows it ſelf in the Life. *Believe the Precepts ſo as to obey 'em; Believe the Promiſes ſo as to Suck Comfort from 'em*, and ſo as to be encouraged thereby in the Way of Holineſs: And *Believe the Threatnings ſo as to be deterr'd thereby from Sin.* And thus to believe the Scripture is no eaſie Matter: For it is eaſie to prove, that few of thoſe who pretend to believe 'em, nay, perhaps are poſſeſt with true and ſaving Faith, do yet firmly believe 'em with ſuch an inward, hearty Perſwaſion, and Operative Faith, as I have mention'd. I ſhall prove it plainly and undeniably to you, by this convincing Illuſtration. If ſome King or Nobleman, who has always been found true and faithful to his Word, without any one inſtance to the contrary, ſhall Declare and give Notice, That whoſoever comes to him by ſuch a Time, and will go over with him beyond Sea to ſuch a Place, when he comes there he'll give him a hundred Pound, and ſo many A-

cres of Land, and make him a great Man; ſo that he ſhall much Advantage himſelf in all Reſpects, and it ſhall be better with him than it is now, if Perſons do believe him (eſpecially they who are Poor and Needy) they will certainly come and accept of his Offer: And if ſuch Perſons do not come, it's a certain Sign that they do not believe him, (I might put many ſuch Caſes.) So when God hath ſaid, *If ye live after the Fleſh ye ſhall dye: It is a People of no Underſtanding, therefore he that made them will not have Mercy on them, and he that formed them, will ſhow 'em no Favour*, Iſa. 27. 11. *He will not be merciful to any wicked Tranſgreſſor*, Pſalm 59. 5. If fleſhly Livers, ignorant Perſons, wicked Tranſgreſſors, notwithſtanding this Declaration of God's Will, will yet perſuade themſelves that they ſhall live in Eternal Happineſs, and that God will be merciful to 'em, this evidently proves that they don't believe thoſe Scripture-Threatnings. Again, when Scripture ſaith, *He that Sowes ſparingly ſhall Reap ſparingly*, though Perſons do Sow, yet if they do it in a penurious, ſcanty, ſparing Manner, and not Liberally and Bountifully, it's a certain Evidence, That they don't believe that Scripture-Promiſe: For I never knew any Man ſo covetous as to be ſparing of his Seed. How many ſuch Inſtances might be given? So that I ſay, it's no ſuch eaſie and common Matter, as many think it, to believe the Scripture; and therefore, I give you this Direction, when you come to read the Scripture, to bring along with you a firm Perſwaſion of the Truth of every thing contain'd therein.

And that this is the Way to profit thereby, is plain from that Paſſage of the Apoſtle, *Heb.* 4. 1. *The Word Preached* (or Read) *did not profit them, not being mixed with Faith in them that Heard* (or Read)

Read) *it*: Implying, That the Way to profit by the Word is to receive it by Faith, whereby it is received into, digested and incorporated into the Soul, and so the Soul is nourisht thereby, as the Body is by it's Food.

7. *Select such Places in Reading as may be of special use to you.* Here I shall only Transcribe, what was written long ago by Mr. *N. B.* in the *Preface* to his Directions for Reading the Scripture. 'He 'that comes to Read the Scripture should especially 'set himself to observe, the most needful Places to 'enlarge his own Knowledge, and further his own 'growth in the true Grace of God. As for Exam-'ple.

'*First*, It were a Thing of admirable Use all my 'Life long, if I did set down all the Places of 'Scripture, that in the Reading I find sensible 'Comfort, and ravishing of Heart in. It may be 'in the whole Bible, I may find Twenty, Forty, 'Fifty, *&c.* of such Places, as I was sure in the 'Reading, did wonderfully fill my Heart with se-'cret Refreshing, and sensibly Joy: Now these Pla-'ces so noted, not only serve for present use, but 'while I Live in any Distress I may have recourse 'to these, as so many Wells of Joy: And if in 'my Grief one or two, or ten of 'em did not 'Comfort me, yet a thousand to one but some of 'em, will have Spirit and Life in 'em to refresh me 'again in my Sorrows. Besides, it marvellously 'establishes my Faith, when I remember in how 'many distinct Places of Scripture, the Lord was 'pleased to Comfort me in Particular. This is 'one Thing we should observe.

'*Secondly*, Would it not be exceeding profitable, 'if I did Note all the Places of Scripture, which 'in Reading of 'em did sensibly smite my Heart, 'and reprove some Fault in me, so as I felt my

'Heart troubled within me? Certainly by that time 'I had gone through the Scriptures, I ſhould ſee 'the Anatomy of my Corruptions, and plainly 'perceive, what things there were in my Nature, 'that God had a quarrel againſt: And ſo might 'be guided by the very Finger of God, to know 'the Faults I ſhould ſet my Self moſt againſt in Mortification.

'*Thirdly*, In Reading, one ſhall find ſometimes 'certain Rules or Counſels given, which one ſenſibly is affected withal, and has an inward Deſire 'O that I could but remember this Counſel of 'the Holy Ghoſt! Now I would Note all thoſe 'Places, that the Holy Ghoſt has made me in 'Love withal in the Reading, that might concern 'my own particular Direction, either at Home or 'Abroad.

And then in the End of the Book he ſets down theſe.

'*Rules or Titles of Things to be obſerved in Reading.*

'1. *Places that in Reading I found ſenſible Comfort 'in.*

2. *Places that I found did rebuke Corruption in 'my Nature or Practiſe.*

'3. *Places that ſhow the Priviledges of the Godly 'above all other Men.*

'4. *Places that ſhow the Affection I ſhould bear to 'God.*

'5. *Places that ſhow me how to carry my Self in 'the Church.*

'6. *Places that ſhow me how to carry my Self in 'my Family.*

'7. *Promiſes that may Comfort me againſt my daily 'Infirmities.*

'8. *Com-*

'8. *Comforts against inward Temptations and Afflictions of Spirit.*

'9. *Promises to establish me, against the Fear of falling away.*

'10. *Promises that may Comfort me against outward Crosses.*

'11. Grounds or *Places that show me divers Points of Religion*, that I could infallibly rest upon, and Live and Dye in the Assurance of 'em.

'12. *Hard Places*, that I would be resolved in the meaning of 'em.

'13. *Comfortable Places concerning Prayer.*

'14. *Places* that direct me in my particular Calling.

'15. *Places* that show me how to carry my Self towards the Wicked, especially when I must needs be in their Company.

'16. *Comforts against Death.*

'17. *Places that show the Glory of Heaven.*

'18. *Places that set out the Terror of Hell.*

'19. *Choice Sentences*, to be learned without Book.

'20. *Sentences* for Children to Learn, briefly expressing the chief Points of Religion.

'21. *Places against Hypocrisie.*

'22. The most Memorable *Sayings* of the Godly in their several Estates.

'23. *Miscellanea*, or Places I would remember, but know not what Head to refer 'em to.

Each of these Heads, or so many of 'em as one shall judge most suitable for himself, may be written on the Top of the Pages, in a Paper-book made for that End.

8. And *Lastly*, *Be careful to Practise what you know, and you shall know what to Practise.* Christ's Promise to such is express to this Purpose. *John* 7. 17.

If

If any Man will do his Will, he ſhall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God. And *David* found the Truth of it by Experience. *Pſalm* 119. 98, 100. *Thou through thy Commandments haſt made me wiſer than mine Enemies: For they are ever with me. I have more Underſtanding than all my Teachers; for thy Teſtimonies are my Meditation, I underſtand more than the Ancients, becauſe I keep thy Precepts.*

Practiſe is the Life and Soul of Knowledge, without which it is but a dead Carkaſs. Hereby the *Tree of Knowledge* will become a *Tree of Life* to us. This is the End therefore that we ſhould propound unto our ſelves, *viz.* to refer all to Practiſe; by performing the Duties enjoyn'd, and avoiding the Sins forbidden in the Word. This *David* promiſed to do, *Pſalm* 119. 33. *Teach me O Lord the Way of thy Judgments, and I will keep them unto the End.* Without this our Knowledge will but aggravate our Condemnation, *Luke* 12. 47. *The Servant that knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his Will ſhall be beaten with many Stripes.* How ſhould we expect that God ſhould inlighten our Underſtandings with the Knowledge of his Will, or give us more, if we don't make uſe of that we have? Yea, we may rather expect, that he ſhould take away that Talent from us, which we hide unprofitably in a Napkin: As he threaten'd to do, *Luke* 19. 24. I ſhall conclude theſe Directions with that Paſſage of *Jerom* to *Celantius*, *Sint ergo Divinæ Scripturæ ſemper in manibus tuis*, &c. *Let therefore the Holy Scriptures be always in thy Hands, and meditate on 'em in thy Mind; yet don't think it ſufficient to have God's Laws in thy Memory, if thou forget them in thy Works, but therefore*

know

know them, that thou mayst do what thou knowest. for not the Hearers of the Law are Just before God, but the Doers of it are justified. These are the Persons who are pronounced Happy by Christ, *John* 13. 17. *If ye know these Things, Happy are ye if ye do them.* Let us *Do* so, that we may *Be* so. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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